

**REMARKS**

The independent Claims 1, 15, 27 and 32 have been amended as suggested by the Examiner, to better distinguish the recited gelling agents from superabsorbent materials described in the prior art. The amended independent claims recite that the gelling agents are “water-soluble gelling agents which crosslink protein.” Support is found in the specification at page 12 lines 15-19, page 31 lines 15-16, page 33 lines 17-20, and page 35 lines 16-18.

In the Advisory Action mailed on 25 November 2003, the Examiner stated that Gagliardi (U.S. Patent 6,245,693) and Tanzer (U.S. Patent 5,782,819) “disclose all claimed limitations.” Gagliardi discloses absorbent gelling materials referred to as “super-sorbers” which form hydrogels upon contact with water. The disclosed super-sorbers:

. . . generally comprise substantially water-insoluble, slightly cross-linked, partially neutralized, hydrogel-forming polymer materials prepared from polymerizable, unsaturated, acid-containing monomers (Col. 5 lines 47-52).

Gagliardi does not disclose “water-soluble gelling agents which crosslink protein” as recited in Applicants’ independent claims. Accordingly, Gagliardi does not disclose the limitations of any claim.

Tanzer discloses similar absorbent gelling materials useful for absorbing water. The absorbent materials swell in the presence of water (instead of dissolving), and are thus water-insoluble (Col. 8 lines 8-46). For instance, the absorbent polymers disclosed are cross-linked prior to use, in order to render them water-insoluble and swellable (Col 8 lines 11-16). Tanzer does not disclose “water-soluble gelling agents which crosslink protein” as recited in Applicants’ independent claims. Accordingly, Tanzer does not disclose the limitations of any claim.

Applicants believe that the Examiner’s remaining concerns raised in the Advisory Action have now been fully addressed and overcome. If the Examiner has any

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reasons for not allowing the case, then Applicants' undersigned attorney respectfully requests a telephone call from the Examiner, and a telephone interview.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Maxwell J. Petersen".

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